

ASF vaccine to next roll out in areas with no recent cases

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture (DA) said it is preparing to fast-track the rollout of the African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine beyond the initial pilot-testing area of Batangas, the scene of a renewed outbreak of the hog disease.

“Administrative Circular (AC) No. 13 revised the vaccination program. Its main objective is to speed up the roll out of the ASF vaccine in key areas, particularly in barangays without cases for at least 40 days,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. De Mesa told reporters Thursday.

He added that the new guidelines also include red (active) and pink (buffer) zones with no ASF results in 40 days.

The active category refers to areas with ongoing ASF outbreaks, or those undergoing surveillance, depopulation or cleaning and disinfection.

“Another amendment was also to simplify the requirements for farms that want to participate in vaccination programs,” Mr. De Mesa said.

Under AC 13, farm willing to participate in the vaccine programs should submit a letter of intent, proof of biosecurity compliance, and registration with the

DA or Bureau of Animal Industry, among others.

The DA added that there is no minimum number of pigs required for vaccination nor do the animals need to be in the same age group.

The DA said the vaccine will be administered only to weaning or grower pigs at least four weeks of age or older. They must be healthy or have tested negative for ASF before vaccination.

The transport of vaccinated hogs for slaughter is allowed if they test negative for ASF during the 30-day post-vaccination period.

Pigs that test positive for ASF but do not show symptoms must undergo additional monitoring and are not allowed for transport.

ASF, first detected here in 2019, started to reemerge in August, prompting the government to roll out vaccines selectively to commercial and small growers. About 600,000 vials were procured.

The Food and Drug Administration has allowed a controlled rollout of the ASF vaccine from Vietnam.

As of Nov. 22, 78 municipalities across 18 provinces had active ASF cases, the Bureau of Animal Industry reported. — **Adrian H. Halili**



PCCI backs anti-dumping probe into cement imports

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said it supports the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) decision to conduct a dumping investigation into cement imports.

PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio said the government needs to protect cement producers against unfair competition. “The cement industry has been facing challenges from increasing imports, dumping from other countries and struggling demand,” Ms. Mangio said in a statement Thursday.

“Despite having surplus production — more than enough to meet market demand — imports continue to flood the market, threatening the viability of the industry,” she added.

On Oct. 31, the DTI issued a notice of preliminary safeguard measures investigation on a motu proprio basis into imports of cement from various countries.

The investigation covered the imports of cement classified under ASEAN Harmonised Tariff Nomenclature Codes 2523.29.90 and 2523.90.00 between 2019 and 2023.

In its preliminary report, the DTI said cement imports are projected to increase 4.96% year-on-year to 7.36 million metric tons this year.

Cement imports grew 10.34% in 2020 and 17.2% in 2021, then dropped 2.89% in 2022. They rose 4.74% in 2023.

According to the PCCI, the cement industry is a significant contributor to the economy, accounting for at least 1% of gross domestic product, employing an estimated 130,000 staff, with a multiplier of around 3x to the economy.

“Additionally, it generates more tax revenue for the government than imports of cement. These could be jeopardized if we allow the influx of imported cement without considering the current production capacity of our manufacturers,” it added.

Ms. Mangio added: “We champion the prioritization of local products that meet global quality standards. Let us protect the future of Philippine-made cement. Let us foster a sense of pride in our homegrown brands,” she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

Rural AI adoption seen boosted by greater broadband penetration

THE PHILIPPINES needs to strengthen broadband penetration in rural areas to fully harness the potential of artificial intelligence (AI), according to industry representatives.

“The hardest part in (adopting AI in) the more remote workplaces is to make sure you get connectivity in the first place,” Microsoft Philippines Chief Executive Officer Peter D. Manquera said during a panel discussion at the BusinessWorld Forecast 2025 forum Tuesday.

Dominic Ligot, founder and chief executive officer of tech startup CirroLytx, said the government should further prioritize the adoption of AI.

“AI is not seen as a big deal, it's on the list of maybe 20 technologies if you look at the national ICT (information and communications technology) roadmap,” he told the panel.

“Before you talk IoT (internet of things), blockchain, 5G, do AI first because AI can teach you all of these other things,” he added.

Around 46% of Filipinos use AI a few times a week or a few times a month for work or personal needs, according to the “Decoding Global Talent” report issued by Jobstreet By SEEK.

However, 42% of Filipinos have never heard of or heard of but never used AI, slightly higher than the Southeast Asian average of 41%.

Languages like Bisaya and Ilonggo can be integrated in large language models, resulting in a more inclusive adoption of AI in rural areas, Mr. Manquera added.

Mr. Ligot also cited the need for reforms in the education system, particularly with regard to raising the number of instructors knowledgeable in AI. Private sector organizations based in the regions should also do engage in training to tap the potential AI opportunities there, he added.

“I think that it's a huge opportunity for everyone not just in the Philippines but worldwide to upskill themselves because the opportunities are endless,” Natalie Pia H. Azarcon, managing partner at IBM Philippines, told the forum. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**



Plastic Odyssey seeks local recycling partners

PLASTIC ODYSSEY, a French nongovernment organization, is seeking to tap local partners to expand its plastic recycling micro-factories in the Philippines.

“We are working on the reduction and alternatives to plastic. The plan is to really partner with local entrepreneurs and create local jobs,” Plastic Odyssey Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Simon Bernard told *BusinessWorld*.

“The best way to do it is to turn this problem into opportunity. So, we will try to find a way to make a valuable business model out of it so that we can create jobs,” he added.

Mr. Bernard said that the group is also seeking partnerships with financing institutions to invest in the micro factories.

“The challenge is to find local operators, local directors for the factories. So that's why we are thinking about building schools and academies to train and create these new jobs from the people who will operate the factory to people who will run the business,” he added.



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Plastic Odyssey, in partnership with Delfingen, has created “low-tech” plastic recycling micro-factories designed to fit inside shipping containers.

The recycling machines have a typical capacity of 100 to 300 metric tons of plastic waste annually and costs about 60,000 to 100,000 euros.

“The plan is to have hundreds, maybe thousands of them that will work together to shred the plastic and then melt it and turn

it into new material,” Mr. Bernard said.

“The idea is really to turn waste directly into product and so (we) are finding local markets to make transport pallets, furniture, or building materials for example, so that the waste can have a price,” he added.

Plastic Odyssey is conducting a three-year survey of 30 countries to establish initiatives to combat plastic pollution. It is set to stop over in Cebu next month.

“We want to help recycle the

plastic that has been produced so far and that will continue to be produced... We see today that there is a huge amount of plastic that has been produced so far. Worldwide, it's about five billion tons of plastic that has not been recycled,” Mr. Bernard said.

The Philippines produces about 2.7 million metric tons of plastic waste per year, with an estimated 20% ending up in the ocean, according to the World Bank. — **Adrian H. Halili**

ADB announces appointment of Kanda as next president

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced Thursday that it elected Masato Kanda as president of the bank, completing the remaining term of predecessor Masatsugu Asakawa.

Elected as the 11th president of the ADB, Mr. Kanda, 59, will assume office on Feb. 23 after a unanimous vote from the ADB Board of Governors. He will

complete the double term of Mr. Asakawa, which runs until Nov. 26, 2026.

“Mr. Kanda's extensive experience in international finance and proven leadership in multilateral settings will serve ADB well in navigating complex global economic challenges and fostering international cooperation,” according to ADB Board of Gov-

ernors Chairman Fabio Panetta, who is also governor of the Bank of Italy.

Prior to joining ADB, Mr. Kanada served in the Japanese Ministry of Finance, having been Vice-Minister for International Affairs.

He was also the Deputy Commissioner at the Financial Services Agency, Deputy Director-

General of the Budget Bureau, and Deputy Vice-Minister for Policy Planning and Coordination, where Mr. Kanada acquired “extensive experience in financial sector policy and macro-fiscal policy.”

Mr. Kanada is also a leading expert in education and science policy as well as university reform. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

PHL exhibitors book \$29 million in food exports at Paris trade show



PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) said Philippine participants at the Salon International de l'Alimentation (SIAL) Paris 2024 booked \$29 million worth of sales.

“This year's Philippine participation generated total sales that increased by more than 11% from 2022,” CITEM said in a statement Thursday.

“In addition, trade inquiries and buyer attendance more than doubled from previous turnout — registering 751 and 768, respectively,” it added.

SIAL, which was held between Oct. 19 and 23 at Parc des Expositions de Villepinte in Paris, was attended by Philippine exhibitors of banana, calamansi, coconut, mango, and ube products, among others.

Among the top-selling products at the Philippine Pavilion at SIAL were seafood items, which CITEM said accounted for nearly \$12 million in orders from the fair.

In a separate statement, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

said Bicol-based pili nut companies performed well at SIAL.

The four pili nut companies — Pili Crush Enterprises; C.O.P. Pili Sweets and Pastries; Phenomenon Group, Inc., and The Rains Delicacies — generated \$653,970 in sales during the event.

“Given the rising trend towards health-conscious products and organic foods, pili nuts, being high in essential nutrients, fit well within this trend,” the DTI said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**